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CONFERENCE PAPER • PROF. DR IFTEKAR IQBAL



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The Environmental Impact of WWI: Afro-Asian Experiences

Abstract

The First World War left a lasting impact on the environment of not only the European war theatres, but of many parts of Africa and Asia. Although recent literature reflects on the environmental impact of the War on Europe, there has been little focus on how the erstwhile colonial world was affected by it. In an attempt to understand the environmental dynamics linked to the First World War, the paper will examine two connected issues. One relates to the implications of the War on the environmental awareness that grew remarkably in the course of the long nineteenth century. Secondly, the paper will assess the impact of the War on the physical environment of some selected regions of Asia and Africa, especially in terms of forestry and water space. In doing so, the paper will argue that the failure to deal with the environmental concerns emerging from the First World War led to even greater environmental disasters during the Second World War, in which the colonial world took a corresponding share.

Profile

Iftekhar Iqbal (PhD, Cambridge) is a historian of modern South and Southeast Asia at the University of Dhaka. His recent monograph, *The Bengal Delta*, examines agrarian economy and wellbeing in the region from an environmental-historical perspective. It has received University Grants Commission of Bangladesh Book Award and Honorable Mention by the inaugural Bernard S. Cohn Prize Committee of the Association for Asian Studies, USA. Iqbal was a holder of the British Academy Visiting Fellowship in London and Georg Forster Fellow of the Humboldt Foundation in Berlin. He is an elected fellow of the Cambridge Commonwealth Society and an Advisory Board Member of the journal *Conservation and Society*. Iqbal is currently working on a book on historical connectivity across Bengal, Assam, Myanmar and Yunnan.